

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Alex Palou

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined now by the champion of the 2021 Rev Group Grand Prix presented by AMR Alex Palou. His second career win based on the fact you won the season opener back at Barber Motorsports Park. The 10 car has now won two in a row here at beautiful Road America. Chip Ganassi Racing has now won three races here in a row at Road America. Tell us about your day.

ALEX PALOU: Thank you so much. I don't know, it was a really good weekend overall. We started not super, super good, but we made some progress, and I feel like we always are really good when the weekend ends, and we were getting -- every run we were doing with the reds, with the blacks, we were getting even closer to Josef. So I was really happy.

And then yeah, I don't know what happened to him, but we took the lead, and that was super exciting, and yeah, we had good power, we had good car setup, and yeah, just super happy.

THE MODERATOR: Were you looking forward to a battle between yourself and Josef at the end?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, we tried. I think it was on the second or third restart that I tried on the inside in Turn 1. It didn't really work because I had somebody in front and I couldn't go deeper, and then in Turn 2 the same.

I was trying to battle with him, but he had a bit more pace than we did at that point, but I was waiting for the last four or five laps. I had a bit less Push-to-Pass than him so that was going to make our race a bit more difficult to battle, but I knew we had a good car. I knew we were a bit faster than him on the straights, so our team did an amazing job and at the end we took it before Turn 1.

Q. On the restart you pass him pretty easily and maybe in your rearview mirror you see that he's in trouble. What are your thoughts when that happens?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I didn't really look at my mirror, I just

went for the outside. It was quite close. Even if he was a bit slower, I was super close so I had to just turn in quite aggressively, and then I just ran. I didn't know if my tires were good enough to keep the lead. It was only two laps, but those two laps when you're in the lead, they can take forever. But no, the car was really good, and we actually took some of that, so yeah.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX PALOU: A win is a win, and it always feels awesome even if it's your lucky day or just because you have really good pace, but for sure the first win, it's always awesome just because it's the first one, and you knew you could win but you never really know if you can win until you win it.

But yeah, this feels super special, as well. We've been close. Indy road course, Detroit, Indy 500, and today I was like, oh, no, we need to get that win.

It was good, but yeah, as I said, a win is a win. It's always the best thing.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I think so just because you can have a really good day, like maybe Barber, we had an amazing weekend where we were dominant I would say all weekend except for qualifying, and here we've been struggling. We struggled to get into Fast Six yesterday. We got into Fast Six, but we didn't really have the pace.

Today we started struggling compared to Josef, so he was super fast. He was flying. But by the end I was able to be there with him, so I think we had the faster car at the end. I knew that we had a bit better straight line speed. I think HPD did an amazing job for this weekend, and the car was good. I was comfortable, I just had a bit less Push-to-Pass than him, and I couldn't really overuse my Push-to-Pass, so I was saving it for the end.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I don't know what to say. It's an amazing team that they work so hard on all the cars. You could see we've had four wins this year already in three



... when all is said, we're done.®

different cars, and we are always up there fighting for the wins or fighting for the podiums every time.

The job that they do back in the workshop and every weekend, it's amazing. It's tremendous. Yeah, they deserve it.

Q. This place a year ago, how important (indiscernible)?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I think last year this place was the place that really changed a bit just because I trusted myself that I could be fighting for podiums in INDYCAR. It's true that we had a really fast car. Every strategy and pit stop was amazing, but yeah, coming back here and being able to not only score another podium but being able to win, it feels awesome.

Q. Does it help you in this situation?

ALEX PALOU: I think yeah, but no, just my confidence of knowing we were really good here, but yeah, this year, to be honest, I'm going to every track knowing that I'm going to have a good car and I'm going to have all my tools to be able to win.

It's more special this place just because I love it, but we go to Mid-Ohio and I think we're going to do the same.

Q. How much does that help you?

ALEX PALOU: A lot. I guess a lot. But most of the Indy 500 qualifying from last year helped, as well. You never know, maybe you should ask Chip if he was already looking at us here last year here or it was later. But yeah, for sure it helped. A podium is a podium, and we got the podium last year on the third race in my INDYCAR career.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I think you can see that our performance during more weekends, it always comes more at the race, just because we have more time to develop the car and for me to get used to. I'm not a rookie anymore, but I'm still kind of a rookie.

Yeah, we just prepare. The good thing is that Chip Ganassi won two races here last year. I had the best data I could have with the on board, so we've been working a lot with the data from last year.

Q. Are you in a hurry to get back?

ALEX PALOU: Yes, I need fried chicken.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX PALOU: Okay, I need somebody to tell me a place, okay.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX PALOU: We were -- I had a good restart, let's say. It's always hard going out of Turn 13 just because you have the dip there, but I was good. I was on my Push-to-Pass, and as soon as I saw I was in fifth gear and I saw I couldn't get him, I saved my Push-to-Pass, and as soon as I saw that there was something weird, like I was getting a lot of tow I thought, I pressed it again and said, oh, wow.

So I didn't really see if he had an issue or not. Obviously I saw later, but at that moment I just thought, oh, wow, we had a lot of power, so I was like, oh, yeah.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I don't know. It's always tough to say. I thought we had a chance, but yeah, you never know what could have happened. I think he had a really strong performance during the weekend and also in the race, but we were getting closer each restart, so yeah, I was hoping for a good chance.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I thought during the whole race we were quite strong on the straights, so yeah, I don't know because we have a really old engine, but HPD did an amazing job of getting that old engine running so fast because we were super strong on all the straights. I knew I could pass him either in Turn 1 or before Turn 12, I thought that was my chance also because it's a really long straight and I could get a big tow. But I don't think without the issue he had I would have overtaken him in Turn 1 at that moment.

Q. You looked stronger under braking in Turn 3. Was that the case?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, we were super strong on straight line and braking, yeah, that's true, but he was super strong in traction, so it was like a -- yeah, that's two different cars and two different drivers, right? That's what you get.

Yeah, I thought we were in a stronger position to fight, just because when you can attack the braking and you arrive to the braking with higher speed, you're going to have a better chance of -- yeah.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I said it before even the first test we did, that that was like a relief for me knowing that I had a strong team around me that I didn't have to think about the car. I know that the car is going to be the best or the second best or it's going to be there to fight, so I don't have to worry about that. I just have to worry about myself.

Yeah, the only issue is that Chip is only happy when we win, so that's why we have to keep it up all the time. So yeah, I will try to keep it up.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, Mid-Ohio is my second favorite place, so I like it.

Q. Why is it your second favorite?

ALEX PALOU: Because I have my first favorite and then my second favorite. Yeah, I don't know. I love the place --

Q. The chicken is excellent there?

ALEX PALOU: Is it? Fried chicken is excellent everywhere. Yeah, I'm going to have fried chicken. I didn't remember that until you said it.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX PALOU: No, because we had the double-header, so first race it's true that it didn't really go so well for me. I think we finished P12 or something like that, but the second one we were starting P3 or P4 so that was going to be a good race, but I don't think so. Every year it's new for everybody, so yeah, I'm not really -- I'm not thinking, overthinking too much about that.

We know we have a strong car there. Last year they were super strong, and my car, the 10 car was involved in the accident, as well. So yeah, I'm sure we're going to be fine.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX PALOU: No, I think you -- I'm super happy. But I don't know, I'm fortunate enough to be working as a racing driver. That's all I wanted when I was a child, and I'm part of the best team in INDYCAR. I'm living the dream. That's why I'm always happy even if things go bad. I know that the next day they're going to be better or maybe worse, but then the next day is going to be better.

So like Detroit, it was a super bad day, but we kept our heads up. We were working a lot, and the next day we had

the podium.

Yeah, you cannot get super excited when you win because now the guys that finish in second, third, fourth, they were not doing a press conference, they are working, so that's why you cannot get super excited. We have another race in two weeks, and we've got to get there.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX PALOU: No, I don't think so, no. You have to be aggressive, and especially here in INDYCAR, it's so competitive. If you're not aggressive, there's going to be another car that's going to be more aggressive than you. I'm just going to drive as I've been driving. I think it's been working out. I was able to overtake when I can, and I just stayed there without doing stupid passes.

But yeah, no, we're going to try and be aggressive still.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX PALOU: I mean, we take a look at the points, obviously, every race. Like we need to know where we are, if we are good or if we are bad. But that's not changing our motivation or our work ethic. Even if we win, we've got to continue to be performing to be P1, otherwise we're not going to last too long there. Three races, I think it's a lot of races. I think until the last race, this championship, it's not going to be decided.

Even if you think a lot about the championship, you have to be here to score those points to still be there. I'm going to look at the points tomorrow, but yeah, I was in the lead after the 500 by 36 or 37 points, and two days later I was one point back.

There's a lot of movement on points, and it's going to keep it going until the last race, I think.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, lots of stuff. I'm not going to say it because probably my competitor are going to listen. But yeah, I learned a lot of stuff, and you win championships by winning races and then staying consistent. If you have a car to finish second, you finish second. You don't have to go and try and win that and end up in the fence.

There's going to be days where we have a car to finish fifth, and that's the best we can do, but when we have a chance to win, we have to take that. That's what I think that Scott has been doing for the past years, and he's the best at it, as we can see.

But yeah, it's tough. It's tough to be consistent here in INDYCAR. It changes so much. Just one lap in qualifying can get you from like P15 to Fast Six, and that changes all your race or even one strategy.

It's tough to be consistent. But yeah, we've been good so far.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX PALOU: Absolutely, yeah. You can ask him if you want.

No, I know that they are -- especially Scott, he's not really like methodical on that. But yeah, I keep asking them a lot of questions. You can ask them.

Q. Being in a points race with Scott Dixon, that's pretty elite company right there. (No microphone.)

ALEX PALOU: I don't know what he's going to do. I know what I would do if I was in his position, and that wouldn't help me. But yeah, I think he's at the point like he won six championships, so he doesn't have to show anything, and he wants the team to be up there. If I go well, he's going to go well, as well, because that means we have a good car.

I don't know if going into the last race and we are matching points, maybe then he's not going to talk to me, like that would be obvious. But yeah, I hope that happens. That would be amazing for the team.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it's amazing. I think I'm in like the best position. I've been super lucky in my life to be able to be here. That was my dream, like not 10 years ago, it was like two years ago that I was in Japan looking at all the races in INDYCAR and asking myself if there was a chance I could be here. It's not like it's been work that's been in the works for like 20 years. It's been like super recent.

So yeah, I'm super happy to be here, and it's crazy, I'm coming from a really small town. I don't know how many people, but I can name some of the people, like it's super small, and it's amazing to be here.

Q. How much confidence does this win give you now?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it gives me a lot of confidence, really. Like four podiums this year, four or five, which it's amazing. Yeah, it gives me a lot of confidence to get that second win. You need wins to -- I don't know, you get a different energy, and all the crew gets to be in Victory

Lane, get all the photos, so it's awesome for all the group, and yeah, gives confidence enough to do it again.

Q. Have you been irritated at all by the praise that Pato O'Ward sometimes gets, and now you have done just as well as Pato so far, and now you're in the points lead?

ALEX PALOU: No. I mean -- no. I'm not that kind of guy that likes to be like all the time like oh, yeah, this -- so no. I'm actually happy that they talk so good about Pato and about Colton going to Formula 1. I'm like, yeah, just take them to Formula 1 and leave me here alone.

Yeah, I'm happy to see that, and I'm really calm here and I'm super happy to be here. But yeah, I'm not that type of guy that is all the time --

Q. You could go that direction?

ALEX PALOU: I'm super happy here. If they would go I would be happy.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX PALOU: About me? That I'm just a normal person, that I had a dream of becoming a race car driver, had some luck. Lots of people was helping me and had lots of dreams, and yeah, was able to be racing in Europe, then in Japan, because that was what I had, and then I was lucky enough to come here in America last year.

One of my dreams, a part of being a race car driver, was to live at some point in America. I didn't know where, when or why, just wanted to live here and to experience living here.

Yeah, I'm enjoying it a lot here.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I always do, and I always -- if you look back at my Twitter feed in '17 or maybe '18 or '19 -- no, it was in '19 before the start of the 500, I tweeted something saying that yeah, Alex, don't worry, one day we'll be there.

Yeah, I think you have to think that you're already there to be able -- that you are there.

Yeah, the first dream was to be part of INDYCAR. You cannot win a championship without being a part of INDYCAR. But then I don't want to be around here doing laps, I want to be here competing and winning.

Q. After the caution did pit strategy play a part in your



win?

ALEX PALOU: I think we were already like up there. I think we had more to lose than to win with the pit strategies and yellows like we saw five or six laps to go. We were not in the lead, let's say, or top two. Yeah, it was a bit scary, if there was another yellow or something that could potentially put other drivers in front. But everything worked out. We had an amazing pit stops all the time. We didn't really have the pace of doing an overcut. We tried, but it didn't really work out. But yeah, for sure the pit stops helped us.

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